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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [ID](#)  
SUBJECT: ACEHNESE VILLAGERS EXHUMING CONFLICT VICTIMS'  
GRAVES

Classified By: Political Officer Stanley J. Harsha for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Acehneese villagers are exhuming the graves of persons executed during the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian government, Georges Paclisanu (strictly protect), Head of Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), told us recently. Based on ICRC observations, interviews and field experience in Aceh, Paclisanu believes the executions were most likely carried out by government security forces (not GAM forces), who stripped the bodies of all clothing, jewelry and any other identification. ICRC cannot estimate the numbers exhumed so far but there are at least "tens" and possibly hundreds, scattered in graves containing up to five or six bodies each. But, when pressed, Paclisanu could not say for certain that security forces carried out the executions. ICRC is just finishing a report on the exhumations. Once this development becomes public, Indonesian civil society and international NGOs will press for full accountability. The Indonesian military is likely to remain stoic, not willing to admit abuses or to make itself vulnerable to prosecution. Once the information becomes public, we recommend that we add it to our accountability agenda. On a separate note, Paclisanu said the GOI has given the ICRC open access to conflict areas since 2004, including complete access to police jails and prisons. End Summary.

¶2. (C) An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff person who recently spent a month investigating the exhumation of bodies by villagers in Aceh is finishing a report, George Paclisanu, ICRC Head of Delegation, told us on October 3. "People are spontaneously digging up bodies," he said, adding that villagers want to believe the bodies belong to relatives, although this is very unlikely given the pattern of the executions. There is evidence that the victims were detained at one location, interrogated at a second location, executed at another location, and finally buried at yet a fourth location, distant from where they were detained. All clothing, jewelry and other identifying material evidence was stripped from the bodies. "You won't find any trace" of identification, he said. "It's rare in these cases to strip everything," said Paclisanu, based on his 23 years with the ICRC in other conflict areas, the past year in Indonesia.

¶3. (C) He said the number of bodies in the scattered graves varies, "five or six bodies here, two or three there." Sometimes only parts of bodies have been found. He said it is impossible at this point to estimate the number of bodies exhumed, saying at least "tens" and possibly "hundreds." "We don't have a data collection system to measure the scale." ICRC also has never been able to measure the number of missing in Aceh perhaps between 1,000 and 2,000, he estimated. The graves are concentrated in former GAM strongholds but near populated areas controlled by security forces, Paclisanu said, pointing to Aceh Timur and Aceh

Meriah districts on a map.

¶4. (C) Paclisanu said the reliability of the findings, including the assessment that security forces rather than GAM were likely responsible, is based on ICRC eyewitness accounts of exhumations, interviews with reliable eyewitnesses, cross-checking villagers, stories with several sources, and stories from prisoners and civilians over the years, including those who escaped detention. Stories of persons who say they escaped are consistent with stories of trusted eyewitnesses, he added. There is evidence that some victims were severely tortured before execution, he said. Paclisanu added that ICRC does not totally rule out GAM.

¶5. (C) Concerned over the next step to take, the Swiss Paclisanu said the ICRC wants to present this report in a manner that will not cause the GOI to obstruct further investigation and discovery, so that the missing can be found and identified. He wants a "constructive" outcome. He believes that the military would attempt to thwart government actions to account for the bodies. "The government has managed to cooperate with the army and is not keen to add another issue, especially in an area likely to lead to prosecution."

¶6. (C) Describing in general the level of destruction inflicted by both GAM and the Indonesian military, Paclisanu said the ICRC has observed that GAM typically flattened entire villages, whereas the military would destroy only about 10 or 15 percent of a village, choosing targets selectively.

¶7. (C) Paclisanu said access to current and former conflict areas has improved dramatically. "Our ability to work in

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this country has improved vastly since 2004." He said ICRC has complete access to persons held in prisons and jails nationwide, including former conflict areas, citing Aceh, Papua, West Timor and Flores. ICRC has found no evidence of torture or severe abuses of detainees in the past year, he said.

¶8. (C) Comment: While reports of disappearances and killings by the military in Aceh were widespread during the more than 20 years of intense conflict that ended with the peace agreement of August 15, 2005, this is the first report we have heard that multiple graves are being exhumed. It is only a matter of time before this becomes public, at which point Indonesian civil society and the international community can be expected to ask for complete accountability, and the Indonesian government could clam up and impede further access to the areas where the graves are located. The military has historically kept a tight lid on human rights atrocities committed by its forces. Extracting information from those responsible for these killings would require an investigation that the military would strongly resist. How this matter is handled will be crucial to ensuring cooperation in accounting for these bodies. We recommend that, at the appropriate time, we add this to our list of human rights accountability issues in our meetings with GOI. However, we should not discuss this information outside the USG until ICRC has released its report. End comment.  
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